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Editorial Notes and Comment

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MEMBERS of the Southern Presbyterian Church are sometimes criticized for not being willing to unite with the Northern Church, and for giving as their reason that the Northern Church has accredited ministers who do not teach a true gospel, but deny some of the fundamental doctrines of the religion of Christ. Here is an extract from a letter written by Rev. L. Mason Clarke, pastor of the First Presbyterian church of Brooklyn, N. Y. It is published in The North American Review, and is in reply to an article published in a previous number of the same magazine by Rev. Dr. S. D. McConnell. It is only to the reply that we wish to call attention: "Dr. McConnell seems to imagine that the Church generally stands for an antiquated theology, that it still believes that 'on a certain date A. U. C. in a remote district of Asia, God took upon Himself the form of a man;' that it still believes the virgin birth, the physical resurrection and ascension, the miracles, etc. The fact is not so. Some do believe these things, and some do not. Some have discovered that what is called, most infelicitously, 'the supernatural,' does not enter into the essential Christian faith. The Bible uses no such word as supernatural. Its word is 'spiritual,' and that is a truer word. What the Church most surely believes today is the Mastership of Jesus Christ. It believes in following him. This is its practical theology and its real religion. What the Church will do is to keep on growing and outgrowing, while following Christ." We wonder how such doctrine as that would satisfy the churches of the South. We do not believe that there is a church in the whole South which would be willing to have a man who would preach such rank heresy. Yet such statements of doctrine seem to attract little attention and raise no protest in many places in the North. We are sure that no man holding such views could remain in the Southern Church. It is a pity that such a great Church as our Northern sister does not see the importance of maintaining the fundamental doctrines of the religion of Christ.

UNION of the churches is persistently demanded by a certain class of people as the cure-all for all the ills of the world. If, say they, the Church had been united as one strong body, this great war would have been impossible and there would be no trouble about making the life of the nation what it ought to be, and many other such things, it is claimed, would be the result. We often wonder why union of the churches is the only union demanded. There are numerous other organizations to which men belong which have not united. Take for example the fraternal orders. We have Masons, Odd Fellows, Red Men, Elks, Woodmen and innumerable others. Each of these is supposed to be working for

the betterment of mankind. No one of them is as large as they would all be, if combined into one body. Each one has many expenses, a large part of which would be eliminated in case of union. It is said that the attendance at their meetings is usually very small, often amounting to not more than ten to twenty-five per cent. of the membership. According to the advocates of Church union it would be so much better if all these societies would unite. But the fact is all men do not think alike, and so all do not want to belong to the same society. Just recently there has been an effort made to get all the societies working for war relief to unite with or at least co-operate with the Red Cross Society. We see that a great howl of protest against this movement has been raised by the seventy other societies which have headquarters in New York. And yet the real aim of all of these societies is exactly the same—to get as many dollars as possible and for each dollar to give the distressed as much comfort as possible. Union in this case is only an economic question. No principle is involved.

FAKIRS are abroad in the land. Look out for them. They are collecting money for all sorts of supposed benevolent work. This is specially true, we are informed, as to orientals who claim to be Armenian and Syrian preachers. Many of them are going through the country with forged credentials. Do not give them any money. The American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief of New York is the proper agency to which such contributions should be sent. All money sent to it goes directly to the help of the destitute without any of it being used for expenses. There is no need even for honest men to come to this country to raise money for such purposes, when it must be done at such great expense. But so far as known all such collectors are frauds. See that your money goes into honest hands.

UNITY and union in the Church are not the same by any means, though it seems hard for some people to see that there is a very vital difference. In speaking of what he thinks would be some of the advantages of union, Rev. Dr. W. B. Selbie says in the Constructive Quarterly: "At the same time it should be clearly understood that any unity brought about by the pressure of some outside need, or the desire to attain greater authority or prestige in the eyes of the world, is not likely to be very real or enduring. . . . Unity on a simply religious basis is quite possible, and will come about as the spiritual level in all the churches rises. Then, and not till then, will they be able to represent the nation in its religious aspect, and to speak in its name."

CHILDREN attending the church service is a condition much to be desired, and a great deal is written on the subject, and many expedients have been adopted in efforts to bring it about. Special hymns, special sermonettes and other schemes have been tried to induce the children to go from the Sunday-school into the preaching service instead of going home. These schemes may work very well for a little while, but the novelty soon wears out, and the attendance soon drops off. We believe the whole principle is wrong. What would be thought of the public school authorities if they spent their efforts in trying to make the school exercises so attractive that the children would easily be persuaded to come to school. Would it not be considered far more appropriate for them, if need be, to persuade the parents that the children ought to go to school. If the fathers and mothers can once be made to realize their own duty about attending church regularly, and then realize that it is their duty to take their children with them to church, the whole problem would be settled. There is not a single excuse given by parents for not doing this that will not apply to the day school just as well. Parents owe this duty to their children in fulfillment of the baptismal vow to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

COLPORTAGE, in the old sense of the term, seems almost to have been abandoned by most branches of the Church. Those earnest, faithful, consecrated men of a former day, who drove all over the country in various kinds of vehicles, accomplished a great deal of good by carrying good religious literature into many homes where it would never have gone otherwise. The most common need in the homes of this country today, among both the rich and the poor, is religious reading matter. One reason for this is that it is not offered to the people. If some consecrated man were sent out in city or country to visit homes he would find many opportunities for placing good books in homes where there are few or none. Because books are scarce in many homes, one that finds an entrance will be often and carefully read, probably by members of several families, and so good seed will be sown. There is so much vile trash distributed broadcast over the land that something ought to be done to counteract its influence. Seventh Day Adventists, Christian Scientists, Russelites and their ilk are doing far more in proportion to their numbers than Christian people are to put literature teaching their doctrines into the hands of the people generally. We believe that the Church ought to go into this work extensively, not for the purpose of making money in the sale of books, but as a most efficient means of preaching the gospel. What does the Church think of it?